



Principles on Climate Action

The representatives of the Irish dairy sector including farmers, co-operatives and processors have agreed the following set of high-level principles in relation to climate action:

1. We commit to playing a positive and constructive contribution to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and the dairy sector.
2. We underline the significant contribution made by the Irish dairy sector to the rural and national economy, one of Ireland's largest indigenous industries, to international exports and the provision of employment. The dairy sector is proudly based on the family farm model and co-operative ownership and supports over 17,000 dairy farms, 60,000 jobs with dairy sector output valued at €11.3 billion and exports valued at €5.2 billion in 2020; Ireland exports 92% of its dairy output to over 120 countries worldwide. Every €1 of exports of dairy goods represents a 90 cent spend within the Irish economy. In stark contrast, every €1 exported by multinational companies represent 10 cent spend within the Irish economy.
3. We point out that the dairy sector is the most profitable sector in agriculture. However, this is as much to do with the low incomes evident in other farming sectors where farm incomes continue to remain at unacceptably low levels. No business sector, however successful, can sustain static or constrained revenues along with increased costs of production. Irish dairy farming is no different. Policy makers need to be able to facilitate pathways for new entrants into dairy farming, to support a vibrant and sustainable sector.
4. Irish farmers will need significant support and assistance through the CAP, EU funding outside of the CAP budget, national exchequer support and industry supports to enable a transition to a low carbon future. The 2020 Programme for Government (PFG) gave a commitment to provide €1.5bn (generated from carbon tax receipts) in funding to a "REPS-2" agri-environmental scheme over the 2021-2030 period. This government also committed that this fund would be additional to existing CAP funding. It is crucial that none of this funding is diverted to meet the Irish Government's co-financing requirements under the next CAP programme.
5. We call for an urgent review of the planning system to support sustainable economic growth in the rural economy.
6. We underline that the Irish dairy sector was restricted for over 30 years due to the imposition of EU milk quotas from 1984 to 2015. Dairy cow numbers in 2020 have just reached dairy cow numbers in 1984 when EU milk quotas were introduced. The recent expansion of dairy production has reduced the carbon footprint of Irish milk and through the adoption of the Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) measures, a further sustained reduction in the carbon footprint of the Irish dairy sector will be achieved.
7. We emphasise the competitive advantage of Ireland's grass-based production system and the low carbon footprint of the Irish dairy sector based on international comparisons. The unique system is based on the sustainable conversion of grazed pasture into high value dairy products, which attract a premium on world markets due to providence, and sustainability of the production chain.
8. We vigorously defend the legitimate rights of farm families to profitably pursue milk production in a sustainable manner and warn against the unintended consequences of actions that will undermine the cost competitiveness of the Irish dairy sector. Restricting milk

production from Ireland will increase global emissions; the introduction of policies that facilitate this to happen will increase climate change.

9. We highlight that climate change is a global issue and warn against the risk of carbon leakage, given that international demand for dairy products and ingredients are increasing year on year due to a growing global population and socio-economic factors.
10. We highlight the significant contribution made by the Irish agri-food and dairy sector to global food security and the supply of healthy and safe nutrition through the production of milk from natural grass-based systems with high animal welfare status.
11. Mindful of the existing low carbon footprint of the Irish dairy sector, we support an approach to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture and dairy sector based on the world class research and advice provided by Teagasc
12. We call for increased levels of funding to support new research and the adoption of technologies to drive mitigation in agriculture.
13. We call for an urgent review into the assessment of biogenic methane emissions and the accounting of carbon sequestration in national inventories.
14. We point out the considerable actions undertaken by the Irish dairy sector to demonstrate leadership in the area of environmental sustainability including the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS), the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) and the Signpost Farm Initiative. We are committed to further actions in this regard.
15. We call for an end to the divisive, unhelpful and damaging public debate on climate change and agriculture.
16. We support the development of a clear and consistent roadmap for the Irish dairy sector to 2030, so as to enable proper planning, support new entrants into dairy farming and to contribute to the future prosperity of the rural economy and its communities in a truly sustainable manner; economically, socially and environmentally.
17. The Irish dairy industry should be given the opportunity and time to address the climate change challenge and to demonstrate its potential to be climate neutral by 2050. This will involve increased understanding and knowledge of the potential of carbon sequestration and its interaction with management as well as the impact of short-lived greenhouse gases (methane). This combined with the aggressive technology adoption at farm level should lead to an agricultural industry being climate neutral.

Dairy Industry
Ireland

Irish Co-operative
Organisation Society

Irish Creamery
Milk Suppliers
Association

Irish Farmers
Association

Macra na
Feirme

